

**Giving Back to Others**  
**By JAMIE CUTLER**  
**Fort Myers, Fla., correspondent**

When Jerry Brow first went to Venezuela, the country was a stop for him in the lucrative, worldwide marketing of stuffed animals from Disney World and Busch Gardens. That's also when he met Edwin Garcia, a young doctor two years out of medical school, who was running a small emergency medical clinic with practically no equipment or supplies.

Seeing the compassion of this man — who was only one year younger than he — was the catalyst for a change in the direction of Mr. Brow's life.

"I was horrified by the conditions and thought to myself, 'What am I doing selling stuffed animals to people who can't even afford to have their teeth taken care of?'" he said. "These people have gone their whole lives without a toothbrush. They showed me how they took twigs to try and clean their teeth.... He made me wake up and see what true poverty is and how fortunate we are here in the United States. I was determined to turn my fortunate life around and give back to others."

At first he bought equipment for Mr. Garcia out of his own pocket — \$60,000 worth. Then four years ago, he created a charitable organization, Humanitarian Medical Relief. For him it's now a full-time job, and he's back in college as a pre-med student. Besides Venezuela, the HMR has helped people in Haiti, Honduras, the People's Republic of China, Guyana, the Dominican Republic and the city of St. Petersburg, Russia.

Mr. Brow enlisted the help of Wal-Mart nationwide to pick up equipment that's donated by medical establishments. In the United States, this equipment may not be the latest model MRI or defibrillator, so it's been retired. But it still works — and in a developing country this could mean saving a person's life.

Right now, Mr. Brow has some \$3 million worth of equipment stored in a warehouse in Fort Myers, Fla., where he lives. From there, it will be crated and sent out. He's raising money to get that accomplished.

Mr. Brow also focuses on collecting unused medical supplies, which are thrown out in the United States because the expiration date has passed. These include materials such as latex gloves, antiseptics and antibiotics. Similar items also come from home health agencies, which are required to throw out unused products after a patient dies.

In 1995, with the help of Dr. Garcia, Mr. Brow began raising funds for a new hospital in Santa Cruz, Venezuela. With the help of volunteers, HMR is building it from the ground up. So far, about \$1.7 million worth of donated equipment and supplies have gone to the hospital, which is operating although only 65 percent complete. During the Christmas holidays, Mr. Brow took a team of volunteer medical workers there. In seven days, they treated 1,000 patients and inoculated 540 children against a variety of diseases such as mumps, rubella and polio.

"It's amazing," he says, "how many lives we've already saved."

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